

Richmond School's Attendance Plan

- effective from Term 1, 2026

In alignment with the Government's STAR (Stepped Attendance Response) system

1. Background

In August 2023, the New Zealand Government announced a nationwide attendance initiative to address declining school attendance. As part of this initiative, all schools are required to implement a **Stepped Attendance Response (STAR)** system by **Term 1, 2026**.

The STAR step system ensures that schools respond to absenteeism in a timely, consistent, and proportionate way—so that no student is left behind. The government sees attendance as the gateway to better educational outcomes, health, and future opportunities.

The government's future target being 80% of students attending school regularly, which means a student being present for at least 90% of the term.

This target is part of a broader Attendance Action Plan aimed at reversing declining attendance trends.

The government's plan includes:

- Weekly attendance data releases to track progress.
- Locally delivered but nationally coordinated campaigns to promote school attendance.
- A traffic light system to identify and respond to attendance issues.
- Clear public health guidance to help parents decide when kids should stay home or go to school.

80% 'regular' attendance is a bold target, especially considering that nationally for many years, the average percentage is much lower than 80%.

- Nationally, Term 4 2024, only 58% of students were attending regularly, Term 1 2025 – 66% and Term 2 2025 58%.
- Traditionally, Richmond School percentages have been higher and this is the case for Term 4 2024 – 71%, Term 1 2025 – 72%, Term 2 2025 – 60%.

Richmond School has always had its own 'Plan of Action' to deal with Attendance matters. This plan is a modification of our previous systems in place.

2. Our Commitment

Richmond School believes that 'regular attendance' is essential for student success.

We are committed to meeting this requirement and fostering a culture where every student is present, engaged, and thriving.

We are committed to ensuring every learner has the opportunity to thrive:

- Creating a safe and inclusive environment where students want to be.
- Identifying and addressing barriers to attendance early.
- Working in partnership with whānau and external agencies, such as the Ministry of Education's, Oranga Tamariki, Women's Refuge, RTLBs, public health nurses, mental health services and the police.

The Ministry of Education Attendance Services is being launched in 2026:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/attendance/attendance-services>

These services can be useful with students who are enrolled but not attending regularly. Schools can refer cases where efforts to re-engage students have failed. Attendance advisors (kaiawhina) then step in to support students and whānau directly.

3. Attendance Monitoring

Greater detail in our Attendance A5 policy on page 5 below.

- Attendance is recorded twice daily using our eTap (cloud-based Student Management System).
- Teachers mark their class eTap rolls at 9:05am and 1:30pm daily.
- Teachers use the codes provided by the Ministry of Education.
- Relieving teachers are given a hard copy of the class roll to be completed and returned to the office immediately after the roll call is completed.
- The office staff check these are all completed within 10 minutes and if not then they make contact with the class teacher to make sure these are completed immediately.
- The office staff check absentee messages on our answer phone system, check emails and then follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents before 10:30am.
- Children arriving late must report to the office and their attendance noted by the office staff.
- Teachers also note if a child is consistently late and how many minutes late they are.
- Continual lateness is monitored by the office staff and teachers (and principal as deemed appropriate).
- Patterns of concern are flagged for support (by teachers and the office staff).
- We look closely at individual, whānau and other cohort trends (such as away on certain days).

4. Our tailored response action and categories. Also, the Ministry of Education's involvement.

Richmond School responses to absenteeism/attendance based on the number of days missed per standard 10 week term:

- **Regular attendance - Up to 4 days (90%+ attendance):** No action required if absences are explained. Staff remain aware and supportive.
- **Irregular absence - 5–9 days (80-90% attendance):** Teacher checks in with student and contacts caregiver to discuss attendance.
- **Moderate absence - 10–14.5 days (70 - 80% attendance):** The leadership team makes contact with whānau to understand barriers, offer support and encourage a significant improvement in attendance.
- **Chronic absence - 15+ days or concerning patterns:** A formal letter sent home. If deemed necessary, appropriate or potentially useful then a referral is sent to Attendance Service and/or external support agencies.

Actions are documented and reviewed regularly to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Punitive actions (formal letters and prosecutions) are seen as a 'last resort' as they are regarded as unlikely to solve or dramatically improve the absenteeism. We believe (based on previous experiences) these are likely to the family leaving the school or applying for 'home schooling' etc.

The government's STAR steps may be followed but our approach can differ depending on the circumstances of each individual situation. More details later in this document.

Day-to-day attendance management activities

Schools

- › Set attendance targets and regularly review attendance data
- › Communicate clearly with parents: expectations, procedures and follow-up steps the school will take when a student is absent
- › Act early in following up absences to support students to stay engaged
- › Escalate as needed, develop support plans, involve other services, consider requesting support from Attendance Services
- › Assess attendance history of new students and share attendance history when students move between schools
- › Use school-wide strategies, including strong relationships and minimising disruptions to the school day and week

Ministry of Education

Attendance Services – local catchment providers

- › Build enduring relationships with schools in catchments
- › Support chronically absent/non-enrolled students and their families
- › Address barriers, develop and monitor plans with schools
- › Provide advice and support directly to schools with the aim of reducing the need for requests for support in the future

Regional and National teams

- › Provide targeted supports and services to schools including assistance with:
 - › Understanding attendance data and trends
 - › Support development of attendance policies and procedures, including Attendance Management Plans
 - › Provide access to specialist services and alternative pathways where needed
 - › Whānau and community engagement
 - › Attendance leadership and governance
 - › Attendance barriers arising from factors in the wider community



Individual Student Attendance activities

Individualised student responses to absence thresholds

Less than 5 days absence in a school term

Parents/Guardians

- › Ensure student attends every day they are able
- › Reinforce good attendance habits
- › Support other parents to reinforce good attendance habits
- › Open communication with school
- › Follow school attendance management plan and associated policies and processes

Schools

- › Communicate with parents about every absence
- › Maintain contact details of parents
- › Provide student with regular updates on their own attendance
- › Report regularly to parents on attendance of their child
- › Support student:
 - › attending school
 - › to continue learning if unable to attend school every day, including using Ministry approved well-being or transitional plans, or health schools where appropriate
 - › to access other education pathways where appropriate

Up to 10 days absence in a school term

Parents/Guardians

- › Return student to regular attendance
- › Contact school to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning
- › Support student to catch up on missed learning
- › Engage in supports offered

Schools

- › Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning
- › Support student to catch up missed learning where required
- › Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counsellor, alternative timetables, PB4L

Up to 15 days absence in a school term

Parents/Guardians

- › Return student to regular attendance
- › Participate in meeting with school to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan
- › Implement strategies at home

Schools

- › Contact parents to escalate concerns
- › Hold meeting to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan
- › Develop and implement a support plan tailored to the reasons and circumstances around the child's absence
- › Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers and request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed

15 days or more of absence in a school term

Parents/Guardians

- › Return student to regular attendance
- › Engage in support plan
- › Participate in regular meetings

Schools

- › Contact parents to inform of escalated response
- › Request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed
- › Participate in multi-agency response
- › Maintain implementation and monitoring of support plan
- › Undertake school-led prosecution, or request Ministry-led prosecution, when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up
- › Unenroll if student will not be returning to school

Ministry of Education

Attendance Service

- › Work with chronically absent and non-enrolled students and their families to identify and address barriers to attendance. This includes:
 - › agreeing changes to be made,
 - › addressing some unmet basic needs impacting on attendance, and
 - › referring students to other services as necessary
- › Collaborate with schools so that
 - › they remain engaged as plans are developed and implemented, and
 - › they can continue to provide support as the student increases their attendance at school, and the additional Attendance Service support is withdrawn

Regional and National teams

- › Facilitate involvement of other agencies
- › Support schools to access other education pathways for a student where appropriate
- › Consider system-wide initiatives for high-risk attendance
- › Reprioritise regional support resources to where most needed/effective
- › Undertake Ministry-led prosecution when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up, when requested by schools

The steps being:

★ The 4 STAR Absenteeism Categories

Category	Days Absent (per term)	Response Focus
Initial Concern	5–10 days	Early intervention: notify whānau, offer support, monitor attendance
Escalated Concern	11–15 days	Formal meeting with whānau, co-create attendance plan, involve support services
Serious Concern	16–20 days	Multi-agency response, deeper investigation into barriers, possible legal steps
Critical Concern	21+ days	Intensive intervention, Ministry involvement, potential prosecution if support refused

5. Whānau Engagement

- Attendance expectations are shared at enrolment and parent evenings.
- Weekly newsletters include attendance tips and reminders.
- Newsletter items about our Attendance rates.
- On our mid-year and end-of-year student reports, a child’s attendance is reported on. Parents and teachers frequently discuss this at Parent-teacher interviews.
- Office staff, teachers and Management proactively make contact with families and discuss the barriers facing the whānau getting children to attend school and devise a plan for them to be at school. Each situation is considered based on our knowledge of the whānau and individual child.
- At times, it is beneficial to show parents the eTap data and graphs as these make concerns very visible. Also, they highlight concerns such as certain days of the week a child tends to be away.
- Management visit homes at times.
- Sometimes a child’s wider whānau can be of significant assistance.
- Support is organised for the particular situation.
- Culturally Responsive Practices are seen as important in our setting.

Culturally responsive practices are about recognizing, respecting, and incorporating the diverse cultural identities of students into every aspect of teaching and school life. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this especially means not only embracing te ao Māori and ensuring that Māori learners feel seen, valued, and empowered, but also the many other ethnic groups we now have in our school setting. These are likely to foster high attendance rates and engagement with our school.

Here are some strong examples of culturally responsive practices in our school:

Whanaungatanga (Building Relationships):

- **Genuine connections with whānau:** Regular hui with families, not just for reporting but to co-design learning goals and support plans.
- **Knowing students deeply:** Understanding their whakapapa, interests, and aspirations—not just their academic data.

Culturally Grounded Curriculum

- **Integrating te reo Māori and tikanga:** Using Māori language and customs in everyday classroom routines, not just during special events.
- **Localised curriculum:** Including iwi history, pūrākau (traditional stories), and local landmarks in lessons to make learning relevant and rooted in place.

Inclusive Pedagogy

- **Ako (reciprocal learning):** Valuing students as co-constructors of knowledge, where teachers also learn from students.
- **Multiple ways of knowing:** Recognizing oral traditions, visual storytelling, and collective learning as valid and powerful.

School-Wide Practices

- **Culturally safe spaces:** Creating environments where students can express their identity without fear—like marae-style classrooms or kapa haka groups.
- **Staff PD in cultural competency:** Ongoing professional development in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, unconscious bias, and responsive teaching strategies.

Collaboration with Iwi and Community

- **Partnerships with mana whenua:** Inviting local iwi to guide curriculum decisions, school events, and strategic planning.
- **Community mentors:** Bringing in kaumātua, artists, or language experts to enrich learning and provide role models.

6. Staff Roles and Development

- **Attendance Lead:** Principal oversees implementation and reporting.
- **Management, office staff and teachers:** Provide extra support, reminders and intervention as required including praising children for being at school and on-time. They also speak with parents when they see them or contact them on the phone or via email.
- **Office staff and teachers:** Responsible for noting initial concerns and notifying management of concerns.
- **Professional Development:** STAR information and procedures are noted in 'Staff Support' files and discussed at the start of the year on Teacher-only day (and more frequently as necessary).

7. Ongoing tracking of Attendance and Review

- Attendance data is reviewed monthly by the leadership team and individuals/families of concern monitored for a number of months (details kept in 'Attendance' folder kept by the Principal).
- The Board of Trustees will be informed by the Principal of 'current attendance' patterns at Board meetings including the Term Reviews conducted the Ministry of Education (national office) - everydaymatters@education.govt.nz
- Feedback is gathered from students, whānau, and staff (formally and informally).
- This plan is updated on a 'needs' basis, to reflect community needs and Ministry guidance.

Attendance

A5

RATIONALE:

Regular attendance at school and participation in appropriate programmes are both desirable and a legal requirement.

PURPOSES:

1. To provide guidelines for parents and staff to ensure all children attend school and take part in programmes.
2. To ensure the Board meets its requirements under Part III of the Education Act.

GUIDELINES:

1. All children enrolled at this school must attend whenever it is open. (Section 25 (1)).
2. The Principal may exempt a student from attendance for a period of no more than 5 school days if satisfied that the student's absence was or will be justified. (Section 27).
3. The Board shall take all reasonable steps to ensure children attend. (Section 25 (2)).
4. Class teachers are to keep an electronic register of attendance in line with the instructions issued.
5. Parents are expected to advise class teachers/office of reasons for absences or lateness. These can be in the form of an email, text, phone message or parents calling into the office. Messages to the office are to be noted in the message register.
6. Class teachers/office are to record absences or lateness on the electronic register.
7. At the end of each term the principal will undertake a review of each child's attendance and at the end of the year (or more frequently if considered desirable) a full review of school-wide attendance trends.
8. Teachers, management and Office Staff will refer to and follow the school's Attendance procedures document (developed June 2025).
9. The services of the Ministry of Education's Tāpīotmata Attendance Service and other professional and other government services will be requested where appropriate.
10. Where the Principal is not satisfied that (after a prolonged period of absenteeism), an absence was justified, or an explanation is not provided on request in writing, the Principal will report the matter to the Board. The Board (usually the Principal) will inform the parents of their legal obligations in terms of section 25 of the Education Act.
11. If unsatisfactory attendance continues the Board may instruct the Principal to initiate legal proceedings in consultation with the Ministry of Education.
12. Any child attending STEMS school, will be marked absent from Richmond School on that day. The parents have chosen to take their children to this organisation we haven't recommended they do so. Nor do we condone it. Richmond School can not be responsible for their health and safety on these days nor for the quality of their education on those days.
13. Teachers/Office staff will record on eTap, attendance codes in accordance with the recent Ministry of Education guidelines (sent out to schools early 2025).

CONCLUSION:

Co-operation between parents and staff should overcome most difficulties with attendance and avoid the need for the Board to carry out its more formal role.

Paul Suisted

Board Presiding Member

Date of Review: 18th June 2025

Next review date: Term 2 2029